



## Watersheds

A watershed is the land that water flows across or under on its way to a stream, river or lake and is nature's way of dividing up the landscape. New England includes many eco-systems that, by virtue of their ecological value, recreational value, or proximity to large populations, hold a special significance to us. EPA New England is focusing particular attention and resources on these special places. Working closely with our federal, state and local partners, these community based initiatives are delivering tangible environmental improvements to these watershed areas.

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# Norwalk River Watershed



## What Makes the Norwalk River Watershed Special?

- It comprises 44,000 acres of southwestern Connecticut and Westchester County, NY, one of the most densely populated areas in New England.
- It drains to Long Island Sound, which is designated as an "estuary of national significance" by EPA and a charter member of its National Estuary Program.

## Why Is the Norwalk River Watershed Getting Special Attention?

- Water quality and fish habitat are somewhat degraded by polluted runoff, sedimentation, and loss of stream bank vegetation associated with urban development.
- EPA, the CT DEP and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) were seeking a "model" watershed for a pilot community-based planning exercise, and all seven watershed municipalities enthusiastically agreed to participate.
- The watershed initiative complements other nitrogen reduction and habitat restoration efforts already underway to restore Long Island Sound.

## What are the Long Term Goals?

- To restore and protect use of the river for contact recreation during warm weather by reducing point and nonpoint source bacteria loads.
- To restore anadromous fish passage and enhance the resident cold water fishery throughout the watershed by removing and/or breaching dams, constructing fish ladders, stabilizing eroding river banks, and enhancing in-stream habitat features.

## Progress/Goals for the Future

### What Partnership Progress has Been Made?

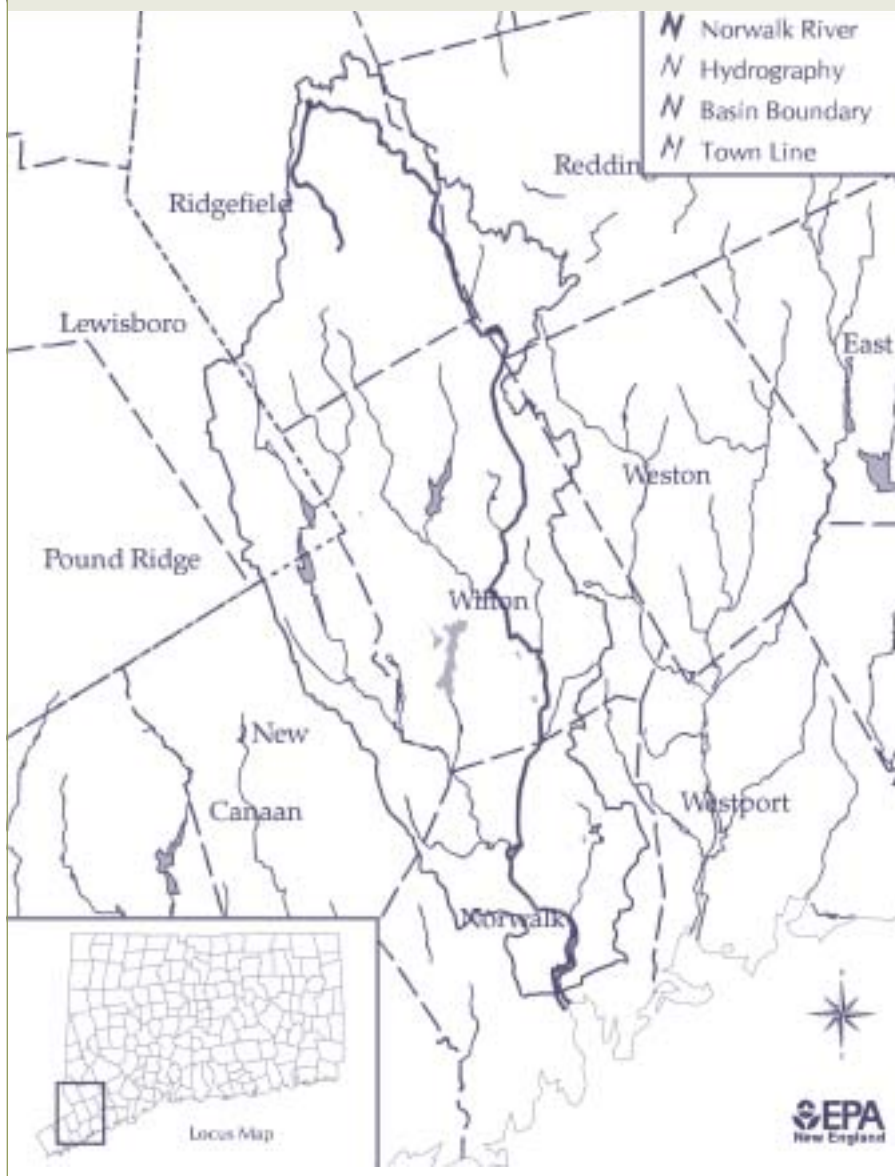
- Municipalities have used the action plan to influence local land-use regulatory decisions.
- The Mianus Chapter of Trout Unlimited, CTDEP and NRCS led efforts to improve stream channel stability, create refuge, or improve spawning substrate within approximately 8,000 linear feet of the Norwalk River.
- The Nature Center for Environmental Activities "Harbor Watch/River Watch" program completed four years of citizen water quality monitoring.
- Since 1996, EPA and CT DEP awarded about \$750,000 in federal Clean Water Act grants to support development and implementation of the action plan.
- NRCS awarded about \$77,000 in financial assistance from the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), with matching technical assistance for habitat restoration work.

### What Major Actions are Planned for 2002?

- The CT DEP will complete a total maximum daily load (TMDL) analysis for the segment of the river impaired by bacterial contamination, specifying the necessary reductions from sewage treatment plants and storm water runoff necessary to meet state water quality standards.
- The City of Norwalk will begin a storm water management project to demonstrate innovative, effective storm water management technologies and practices.
- The Fairfield County Soil and Water Conservation District is working with public works departments to

(continued)

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### Who are the Partners?

EPA New England • CT Department of Environmental Protection • USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service • City of Norwalk, CT • Town of Wilton, CT • Town of Ridgefield, CT • Town of Redding, CT • Town of Weston, CT • Town of New Canaan, CT • Town of Lewisboro, NY • CT Department of Transportation • U.S. Geological Survey • U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service • U.S. Army Corps of Engineers • University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System • Fairfield County Soil and Water Conservation District • South Western Connecticut Regional Planning Agency • Westchester County Department of Planning • Norwalk River Watershed Association • Save the Sound • The Nature Center for Environmental Activities • Mianus Chapter of Trout Unlimited • Norwalk First District Water Company • Norwalk Second District Water Company • Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk

### What is the NRWI?

The Norwalk River Watershed Initiative (NRWI) was launched in 1996 by several Long Island Sound Study partner agencies to demonstrate:

- ▶ a watershed approach with a goal of restoring and protecting the water quality, habitat, and other resources of tributaries that drain to Long Island Sound;
- ▶ an understanding that the cumulative impacts of local land use decision-making affect the health of a watershed;
- ▶ a voluntary, collaborative partnership effort among federal, state, regional, and local government agencies and citizen groups;
- ▶ a high degree of public involvement;
- ▶ a comprehensive approach to watershed management focusing on the resource needs of the watershed; and
- ▶ an emphasis on implementing solutions to priority issues.

### What Major Actions are Planned for 2002? (continued)

reduce road sand and salt runoff to the river.

- ▶ NRCS and Norwalk will begin a streambank and fish habitat restoration project on the Silvermine River, the main tributary to the Norwalk River.
- ▶ Plans by CT DEP and NRCS continue to address the “flock process” dam in Norwalk and Merwin Meadows dam in Wilton to allow upstream anadromous fish passage on the river.
- ▶ The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk will complete a video on the watershed and how residents can help prevent nonpoint source pollution or “runoff”.
- ▶ The UCONN Cooperative Extension System and the Town of Wilton will conduct a turf management project and teach proper environmentally sound lawn care practices to homeowners.



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